

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

|                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| STATE:<br><b>INDIANA</b> |      |
| COUNTY:<br><b>BROWN</b>  |      |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY         |      |
| ENTRY NUMBER             | DATE |

**1. NAME**

|   |
|---|
| COMMON:<br><b>T. C. Steele State Memorial</b> |
| AND/OR HISTORIC:                              |

**2. LOCATION**

|                                       |                   |                         |                    |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| STREET AND NUMBER:<br><b>R. R. #1</b> |                   |                         |                    |
| CITY OR TOWN:<br><b>Nashville</b>     |                   |                         |                    |
| STATE<br><b>Indiana</b>               | CODE<br><b>18</b> | COUNTY:<br><b>Brown</b> | CODE<br><b>013</b> |

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY<br>(Check One)   | OWNERSHIP   | STATUS   | ACCESSIBLE<br>TO THE PUBLIC   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> District<br><input type="checkbox"/> Site<br><input type="checkbox"/> Object<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building<br><input type="checkbox"/> Structure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public<br><input type="checkbox"/> Private<br><input type="checkbox"/> Both   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress            | Yes:<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted Bldgs.<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted Trails<br><input type="checkbox"/> No |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)  |   |  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural<br><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational<br><input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Government<br><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Military<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Park<br><input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence<br><input type="checkbox"/> Religious<br><input type="checkbox"/> Scientific | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)<br><b>Art Studios</b>                                    |

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| OWNER'S NAME:<br><b>Indiana Department of Natural Resources</b> |                          |
| STREET AND NUMBER:<br><b>608 State Office Building</b>          |                          |
| CITY OR TOWN:<br><b>Indianapolis</b>                            | STATE:<br><b>Indiana</b> |
|   | CODE<br><b>18</b>        |

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:<br><b>Brown County Courthouse Deed Record #55, Page 98</b> |                          |
| STREET AND NUMBER:<br><b>Main and VanBuren Streets</b>  |                          |
| CITY OR TOWN:<br><b>Nashville</b>   | STATE:<br><b>Indiana</b> |
|   | CODE<br><b>18</b>        |

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| TITLE OF SURVEY:<br><b>U.S. Surveyor General Public Lands Survey for Indiana Vol. 1 Pg. 185<br/>James Hedges, 1819, Arthur Henrie 1835</b>                                     |                          |
| DATE OF SURVEY: <b>1819 and 1835</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local |                          |
| DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:<br><b>1. National Archives, Washington, D.C. and<br/>2. Indiana State Archives, State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana</b>                        |                          |
| STREET AND NUMBER:<br><b>(See line immediately)</b>  |                          |
| CITY OR TOWN:<br><b>Washington, D.C.<br/>Indianapolis</b>  | STATE:<br><b>Indiana</b> |
|  | CODE<br><b>18</b>        |

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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COUNTY:

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

|           |                                    |   |                                |  |                                |                                    |
|-----------|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One)                        |   |                                |  |                                |                                    |
|           | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good      | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair  | <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated  | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins | <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed |
|           | (Check One)                        |   |                                | (Check One)                            |                                |                                    |
|           | <input type="checkbox"/> Altered   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered | <input type="checkbox"/> Moved | <input type="checkbox"/> Original Site |                                |                                    |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Theodore Clement Steele was born near Gosport, Indiana, September 11, 1847 and as a youth displayed ability for his art work by winning prizes at Indiana fairs. He attended Waveland Collegiate Institute in Montgomery County and was graduated in 1868. During his years at the Institute he probably received instruction in drawing, however, before he was graduated he himself became a teacher of Drawing and Painting.

Subsequently Mr. Steele studied painting briefly in Chicago and Cincinnati, and by 1870 was earning his living as a portrait painter.

Mr. Steele realized the advantages of studying further under well-known artists of the eastern cities but was determined to journey to Europe to study at Rome, or Paris or German cities. He held to the idea of a sojourn in Munich and was aided in his plans by an Indianapolis art supplies merchant, one Herman Lieber who was a native of Dusseldorf, Germany.

Out of his friendship and association with Mr. Lieber came the bold idea of a plan "to sell shares" to subsidize Steele's study in the studios and galleries of Munich. Significantly enough, other Indiana artists joined to form a contingent of congenial young artists and their families. This phase of Steele's life and training lasted five years (1880-1885). Each time, as the end of a study period drew near, Steele realized he needed more time to improve his techniques. Each time his Indiana sponsors came up with the necessary funds to further his studies. In the interim, Mr. Steele had sent some paintings back to Indianapolis. By 1884, two lots of paintings had arrived. This same year saw Mr. Steele receive a First Class Prize (a silver medal) for his painting "The Boatman".

By 1885, the European study had come to an end and the Steeles returned to Indianapolis in June of that year. After his return he maintained a studio in Indianapolis for many years, and in other Indiana cities.

During the year that followed, Mr. Steele painted scenes along the Muscatatuck River near Vernon, Indiana. Later he was commissioned to paint the Vermont hills, ancestral home of the Fletcher family, Indianapolis financiers. He also was drawn to his early childhood scenes and painted in the vicinity of Pine Hills, now a part of Shades State Park.

The Indiana scene was his forte' and he journeyed over much of the state to find vistas of his liking. Spencer and the Mississinewa areas were the locales that appealed to him in the late 1890's. He exhibited his works at a number of places including Chicago, Illinois and Atlanta, Georgia. During this period he augmented his earnings from paintings by conducting a studio where he offered instruction in drawing and painting.

In 1896 Steele helped to organize the Society of Western Artists. He was joined by J. Ottis Adams and William Forsyth (friends of the Munich days), and three artists each from five other midwestern cities -- Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Cleveland and Detroit -- to form the Society. Annual shows were held in each of the six cities (including Indianapolis) from 1896 through 1914, and Steele exhibited in each of them.

The last few years of the 1890's brought much joy to the Steele family -- and some sorrow. Mrs. Steele -- Mary Elizabeth Lakin -- passed away November 14, 1899. She was only 49 but she had been a deep inspiration for her husband, her family and her many friends.

In 1905 or 1906 Steele had learned of the southern hills of Brown County and of their likely value as scenic painting material.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet)

|                         |      |
|-------------------------|------|
| STATE<br><b>INDIANA</b> |      |
| COUNTY                  |      |
| <b>BROWN</b>            |      |
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(Number all entries)

7. DESCRIPTION - Continued

He also had become acquainted with Selma Neubacher of Cincinnati and Indianapolis. She was an art student and in 1906 was assistant supervisor of art in the Indianapolis public schools. Early in April 1907 Steele purchased a large tract of land some 1 ½ miles south of Belmont, a hamlet between Bloomington and Nashville.

Steele immediately set about to clear part of the land for a site for his new home since he and Selma Neubacher were now planning to be married. He at 60 and she at 37. The home-land now totalled 211 acres.

Another Brown County art pioneer, Adolph R. Shulz wrote: "On my second visit to Brown County in June 1907 I learned that Mr. Steele had just purchased a large tract of hill land near Belmont and was building a studio home on it. I walked over to see him (from Nashville) and found him setting (sic) on a pile of lumber directing carpenters who were laying floor joists of his first building. He was to marry Selma Neubacher when the house was completed. In a letter written to his fiance the next day he reported my visit and in it the following 'who knows but we may be pioneers and other artists may come here'. This letter was written June 24, 1907. The very next year the Brown County (sic) Art Colony became the largest in Central States and it has remained so ever since in 1908 there were between 20 and 25 artists mostly from Chicago, Indiana artists followed".

(Excerpt from a letter Adolph R. Shulz to Kenneth R. Coughill,  
Director of the Division of State Parks, September 2, 1955)

Thus we see that Mr. Steele and Mr. Shulz were fellow artists and fellow pioneers in the famed Brown County Art Colony which has blossomed and flourished in the unique hills of Brown County.

"Before long Mr. and Mrs. Steele had built a rambling, spacious house and lofty studio, situated 600 feet above the surrounding Salt Creek flats. Although of little agricultural value, the land yielded (under Mr. Steele's hand) an unfailing crop of paintings with its great variety of trees, ravines tiny streams, its rounded hills, the views into the purple distances and its changing aspects under the play of sun and cloud" (from Outdoor Indiana).

Mr. Steele continued his work painting portraits of the best known men and women of the state, among them President Benjamin Harrison, Charles W. Fairbanks, James Whitcomb Riley, W. H. H. Miller, Mrs. May Wright Sewall, and Mrs. Catherine Merrill -- and many others.

The 211 acres became the painter's abode, his inspiration, the scene of much of his activity and his life. As time passed and the Steele's had need for more rooms, they added to the rambling frame residence. It grew, in a manner like "Topsy" to a one-story split-level home of rooms some 44 ft. x 95 ft. containing 10 rooms. First it accommodated his studio; but then he needed more space in the latter. The result was the large, separate barn-like structure, painted dark red and with practically all of the north wall of windows. This structure then became his studio, his workshop, his sales room and his retreat. The Studio is 30 ft. x 50 ft.



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7. DESCRIPTION - Continued

When his popularity increased there was a need for guest houses and these were erected nearby on the south end of the knoll. These were occupied from time-to-time by students and by kindred souls who enjoyed basking in the freedom of the wooded hills, and no less, in the company of an extremely capable artist and philosopher.

The residence, the Large Studio and the Small studio make up the memorial buildings transferred to the State of Indiana in 1945, some 19 years after the death of Mr. Steele. Mrs. Selma Steele desired that the land and its buildings be maintained as a tribute to the artist and for the benefit of Hoosiers and their guests.

Another structure of note, since it perpetuates the early Brown County pioneers, is the Dewar log cabin. It was built by Peter Dewar shortly after he emigrated to this country from Scotland in 1853, and was moved log-by-log to the Steele property in 1934 where it was re-erected as a symbol of the hardy pioneers.

There are three trails open to the public for the enjoyment of hikers. Their names conjure up the nature of the Steeles - - - Wildflower Trail, Whip-Poor-Will Haunt, The Peckerwood Trail.

The Path of Silences leads to the family graveyard near the Dewar Cabin where rest the ashes of T. C. and Selma N. Steele and other members of the family.

The Memorial is open to the Public.



# SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Pre-Columbian | ☐ 16th Century | ☐ 18th Century | ☒ 20th Century  
☐ 15th Century | ☐ 17th Century | ☐ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering          | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry             |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention            | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture            | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape            | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art          | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature           | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military             | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

"For most Hoosiers at all aware of their heritage in art, THE Hoosier artist is T. C. Steele, known in his lifetime as the "dean of Indiana artists", and even now as the pioneer who "established" the Brown County Art Colony". So says Lynn Hopper, columnist in the Indianapolis Star, December 18, 1966.

While there will be those who believe that the honors for originating the art colony should be shared by others, such as Adolph R. Shulz, the fact remains that Mr. Steele was the one, who in the early 1900's, was so inspired by the Brown County Hill country that he elected to buy the land, carve a home site out of its wooded hills and erect a residence and studios where he lived, worked and enjoyed life for the next 19 years.

Steele's works reflect the artist's appreciation of the Hoosier countryside and the people of Indiana. Although he also painted during his early days, the Oregon landscapes and seascapes -- and the copies of old masters during his Munich period -- he is best known for his pleasant renditions of the Indiana scene. We must not discount his portraits since they include the great (see No. 7, Description) and near-great, but also portraits of lesser known personages. These latter must have been his "bread and butter" paintings since as a young artist who painted to live he, without a doubt, was a prolific painter.

It is not a disparagement to recount that T. C. Steele was not too well-known outside of Indiana. He was convinced, however, that the Indiana scene offered possibilities almost without end and he spent his days painting for enjoyment as well as remuneration and a livelihood.

At his death there were more than 700 canvases to be disposed of and his widow arranged that they be divided between surviving members of Mr. Steele's first family and herself. Approximately half went to each. The ones which fell to Mrs. Selma Steele's lot were donated to the State along with the property, studios and residence, etc. in 1945.

As for honors, Mr. Steele received many. At one time he was president of the Society of Western Artists. He received honorary degrees from Wabash College and from Indiana University. Several of his paintings were chosen to represent Indiana at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in 1915 in San Francisco.

Steele was appointed artist-in-residence at Indiana University in 1922 and spent the winters at the school where life was a bit easier for a man of his years. He received an honorary degree from the University as a reward for his great talents. Doubtless the receipt of an honorary doctor

(Continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

## 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Selma N. Steele, Theodore L. Steele, Wilbur D. Peat, "The House of the Singing Winds" Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis 1966
2. Shulz, Adolph R., correspondence.
3. Steele, Theodore Clement, Personal Papers (at the Memorial)
4. Outdoor Indiana, Nov. 1947, Indiana Department of Natural Resources
5. Miscellaneous - Clippings, Indianapolis Star
6. Steele, Selma N., "The T.C.Steele Sanctuary of Beauty" (a Pamphlet)

## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY |                         |                         | O<br>R | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY<br>OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES |                         |  |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|---|-------------------------|--|
| CORNER   | LATITUDE                | LONGITUDE               |        | LATITUDE  | LONGITUDE               |  |
|  | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds |        | Degrees Minutes Seconds   | Degrees Minutes Seconds |  |
| NW   | 39° 08' 17"             | 86° 21' 04"             |        |   |                         |  |
| NE   | 39° 08' 17"             | 86° 20' 26"             |        |   |                         |  |
| SE   | 39° 07' 37"             | 86° 20' 26"             |        |   |                         |  |
| SW   | 39° 07' 37"             | 86° 21' 04"             |        |   |                         |  |

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 211 Acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY  | CODE |
|--------|------|---------|------|
|        |      |         |      |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
|        |      |         |      |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
|        |      |         |      |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
|        |      |         |      |

## 11. FORM PREPARED BY

|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| NAME AND TITLE:<br><b>Robert D. Starrett, Administrative Officer, Division of Museums &amp; Memorials</b> |                                     |
| ORGANIZATION<br><b>Indiana Department of Natural Resources<br/>State of Indiana</b>                       | DATE                                |
| STREET AND NUMBER:<br><b>202 North Alabama Street</b>   |                                     |
| CITY OR TOWN:<br><b>Indianapolis</b>  | STATE <b>Indiana</b> CODE <b>18</b> |

## 12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

## NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☒ State ☐ Local ☐

Name Joseph D. Cloud

Title Director  
Department of Natural Resources

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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(Number all entries)

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE - Continued

of laws degree brought much satisfaction, though this man must have received deeper satisfaction in the knowledge that he could record on canvas for all time what the normal traveler sees in a landscape for a fleeting moment.

Incidentally, the parchment (the degree) and a carved chest purchased with the \$100 gold piece given the Steeles by the Indiana Alumni Association are part of the memorabilia on display at the Studios. Dozens of his paintings - portraits, landscapes and studies are on view where the appreciative visitor may enjoy them in their original setting -- Mr. Steele's studio, workshop, sales room and retreat. The Studio was all this!

T. C. Steele was a philosopher, a student of nature and a student of life. On December 4, 1925 he was privileged to present a lecture at the Ft. Wayne Art School and Museum where he stated:

"Beauty in some form is back of all art. We cannot define beauty. It is so varied in its manifestations we can but test its authenticity. We know it by its reactions upon ourselves. It is that quality in a work of art or a scene in nature that produces the feeling which the psychologist call the aesthetic emotion".

" - - - there is a penalty for the destroyer of natural beauty, in that we have destroyed so much of our birthright and all of the good and joy that should come from it, not only for ourselves, but those who come after us.

"A true conservationist would save the remnants (of the natural scene) on other than economic grounds. City Parks are worth all the immense sums that they cost, but in a way they are artificial, they do not speak to the lover of nature in the rugged vital accents of the untamed woods and streams of our original hills and forests".  
(from original text in the collection of Steele papers at the Memorial)

If one can but view the Steele landscapes and the settings from which T. C. Steele built them, he will reap an appreciation, yes an appreciation of a great man who has not reached his pinnacle.

The Indiana scene is better for having a talented artist record for all time the beauty of the Brown County Hills.

On his gravestone are carved his own words: "Beauty Outlives Everything"

